

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY	USSR (Leningrad Oblast/Pskov Oblast)	REPORT	
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Information

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1. [] most of the western part of Leningrad Oblast is flat country covered by forests and marshes, especially north of the Pskov (N 57-47, E 28-23)-Staraya Russa (N 58-00, E 31-20) railway. [] the forests as real jungles, impassable to men and transportation, and a haven for partisans. In the marshes, there originate many of the rivers which flow into the Gulf of Finland and the Lakes Peipus (Peipsi, N 58-45, E 27-30) and Il'men (N 58-30, E 31-15). In most cases, these rivers have low banks and their deep waters run slowly in muddy beds. 25X1
2. [] the Velikaya River, which flows into Lake Pskov (N 58-00, E 28-00), has a fast stream and is navigable as far as Lugovitsy (N 57-32, E 28-10). Near the town of Pskov, the river has high limestone banks and is spanned by two steel bridges, one bridge for vehicles and the other for the railway. The banks of the river between these bridges are low and sandy, and suitable for amphibious vehicles.
3. [] the Plyussa River is deep and slow-running, and flows through marshy country; it usually causes spring floods in April, and creates a typhoid menace throughout the entire area up to Narva (N 59-23, E 28-12).
4. [] the Shelon River, which flows into Lake Il'men, is fast-running in its upper reaches and has a hard bed. At Forkhov (N 57-45, E 29-33), the river has high limestone banks and is spanned by a steel road bridge and a steel railway bridge. In its lower reaches, the river runs slowly in a muddy bed with low banks. 25X1
5. [] the Luga River flows through forests and marshes. At the town of Luga (N 58-44, E 29-52), the banks of the river are sandy, but at Kingisepp (N 59-22, E 28-37) they are limestone and six to seven meters high, forming a natural obstacle. The depth and width of the Luga River at Kingisepp are four to five meters and 80 to 120 meters, respectively. At Kingisepp, the river is spanned by two steel bridges, one bridge for vehicles and the other for the railway. After the Soviets destroyed these bridges while retreating in 1941,

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the Germans spent considerable time and effort in rebuilding both of them, particularly the railway bridge. At the time, in 1941, the loss of these two bridges had great effect on the flow of supplies since the roads, including the Tallinn-Leningrad road, could not handle the heavy traffic of supplies demanded for the front.

6. [redacted] at Ust-Luga (N 59-41, E 28-16), at the mouth of the Luga River, there is a Soviet seaplane base where twin-engine flying boats and single-engine hydroplanes on floats are stationed.
7. [redacted] Ruch'i (N 59-46, E 28-29) is a Soviet military town, which has completed naval docks and uncompleted submarine bunkers along the shore. [redacted] the walls of the bunkers had been built, but the roofs had not been erected. 25X1
8. [redacted] the tributaries of the Luga River which flow through the villages of Zhel'tsy (N 58-50, E 29-56) and Dolgovka (N 58-54, E 29-55) form two rivers that pass under the Pskov-Leningrad highway. These two rivers are spanned by wooden road bridges and steel railway bridges. The rivers themselves are about 30 meters wide and 1.5 to 2 meters deep.
9. [redacted] the first firm stand by the Soviet army in 1941 was along the Shelon River in the Porkhov area and along the Luga River. The fortifications along the latter river were strong enough to prevent the German from capturing the town of Luga until weeks later, in attacks from the east. 25X1
10. Along the east shores of Lake Peipus [redacted] the land is covered by marshes. The area between Kingisepp and Slantsi (N 59-09, E 28-05) consists of marshes, which are laced with ditches and overgrown with bushes and which can be traversed only on foot. [redacted] similar marshes exist between Volosovo (N 59-28, E 29-29) and Lake Samro (N 58-58, E 28-48), which is located approximately 20 kilometers south of Volosovo. 25X1
11. [redacted] the area south of Gdov (N 58-46, E 27-48) and the triangular area formed by Zamogil'ye (N 58-33, E 27-50) - Samolva (N 58-18, E 27-36) - Molodi (N 58-19, E 28-15) are covered by swampy meadows, which can be crossed by light vehicles with caterpillar treads. The marshes south of Gdov, between Afonassovo (N 58-42, E 28-10) and the railway line, are overgrown with reeds and are passable only on foot.
12. [redacted] in the Lake Syabero area there are marshes, situated about 25 kilometers west of Luga, which were used by the Germans during the winter in World War II as landing grounds for Fieseler Storchs and other light aircraft engaged in special operations. 25X1
13. [redacted] the largest extent of marshland is located in the triangular area formed by Luga - Orfino (N 59-18, E 30-07) - Lyuban (N 59-21, E 31-15), particularly around Lake Vel'ye (N 59-00, E 30-15), where the marshes are impassable even in summer (sic). The villages in this area are situated on higher ground than the previously mentioned areas, and are interconnected by soft narrow roads, which are overlaid with wood and branches to accommodate horse and cart traffic. Similar to these roads are the routes between Pechkovo (N 58-53, E 30-38), Chashcha (N 59-10, E 30-18), and Dubovik (Duboviki, N 59-10, E 30-48).
14. [redacted] in the area of Gdov all the marshes are frozen over during the winter between November and March and, with snow permitting, can be crossed by vehicles. Between seasons, most roads and marshes are impassable for transport. [redacted] no large-scale drainage work had been undertaken. The small drainage ditches that exist can be crossed by vehicles if the ditches are first filled in with readily available branches. [redacted] all the rivers in this area are covered with ice from the end of November to the end of March and can be crossed by men and vehicles. 25X1

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15. [] at Slantsi there is an opencast oil shale mine, which could be easily flooded if necessary. 25X1
16. [] the climate in Leningrad Oblast as similar to that in the Baltic states; namely, warm in summer and cold with much snow in winter. The summer is considered dry during June, July, and August since aside from occasional thunderstorms it seldom rains then. [] the autumn rains commence at the end of September or beginning of October and continue until the start of the frost and snow. Normally, the ground is covered with snow from the first part of December to the end of March, at which time the prevailing winter winds blow from east to northeast. During this period, only the main roads can be used by motor vehicles; the other roads require horse-drawn sledges. The sledges must be of the small, light type used locally and not the factory-made type used by the Germans in the area during World War II, which proved too heavy. Snowdrifts can cover a road for 10 kilometers or more and make the route impassable. During the German occupation, many gangs were engaged in keeping the roads cleared of snowdrifts while guards protected the workers against attacks by partisans. The TODT Organization was found to be extremely useful for this purpose. To allow for the icy condition of the roads in the winter, sand had to be provided during the summer. The Germans distributed such piles of sand every 100 meters or so along the roads and considered this precaution invaluable during the winter. [] temperatures during the winter usually range from -15 to -25 degrees Centigrade, but in some years range as low as -35 to -45 degrees Centigrade. The coldest months are January and February, with the middle of February usually bringing a few days of thaw accompanied by drizzle and frost at night. As a result, the roads become icy and slippery, and under the effect of night frost can snap caterpillar tracks if the latter are left on too tight. To prevent this impairment, the tracks have to be slackened for the night during the thaw period. The thaw is usually followed by a snowstorm, which does not last more than a day. In the spring, the melting snow inundates the poorly conditioned roads, leaving them muddy and difficult for vehicles. [], an example in point is the Pskov-Gdov main road, on which heavy tanks are not able to travel more than five miles per hour. 25X1
17. [] the terrain in Leningrad Oblast, especially in the northern section, permitted operations on a large scale during the German occupation, but only in the directions of the main roads, Pskov-Porkhov-Staraya Russa or towards Novgorod along the routes Pskov-Luga-Leningrad and Narva-Kingisepp-Leningrad. The area around Leningrad consists of marshy forests and, except for about 30 kilometers surrounding the city itself, there exists a very poor network of roads. According to source, all the above-mentioned rivers, with the exception of the Plyussa River, flowed across the various routes of operations and were, to a larger or smaller extent, obstacles. 25X1
18. [] farmsteads did not exist in the Leningrad area as they had been demolished (sic) and replaced by collective farms, on which the farmers were housed in wooden barracks that together resembled small villages. In some cases, former villages became the centers of the State farms. Soviet villages were called "One Street Villages" on the basis of the fact that a village consisted of about 50 to 100 houses with cow-sheds and other structures all under one roof and located on the same side of the street, leaving the village a long and narrow row of houses. In other places, the houses were situated on one side of the street and the sheds on the other. All buildings were constructed of timber, with each log being about 20 to 25 centimeters in diameter. The cracks between logs were filled in with moss and the roofs were made of thatch. Not a single house was bullet proof and the danger of fire was great (sic). Electricity was not available in the villages and drinking water had to be drawn from open wells. To add considerably to the danger of disease, there were no toilets in the villages, and the cow-sheds were used for that purpose, instead. In towns along the main roads, the buildings were made mostly of stone, whereas on the outskirts they were made of wood. In the smaller towns, almost all the buildings were made of wood. 25X1

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19. [] the only good road on solid foundations in the western part of Leningrad Oblast was the Pskov-Gatchina (N 59-34, E 29-35) highway, which, though dusty in summer, ran practically a straight course. On either side of the road, for about 100 meters, all forests and bushes had been cleared away by the Germans in 1943 as a precaution against partisans. The only asphalt-covered roads existed in the vicinity of Leningrad. The smaller, dirt roads were used by motor vehicles only during the summer months when it was dry. Once the rains came, vehicles sank into the roads up to their axles. The only precaution against this dilemma was for every vehicle to carry made-up bundles of branches, the length of which exceeded the width of the vehicle. The branches could then be placed under the wheels or tracks when required. [] branches were available everywhere, but necessitated the recruitment of labor to collect a proper supply. 25X1
20. [] tanks and self-propelled guns could usually operate only on the main roads in the western part of Leningrad Oblast. Because of the forests, artillery was limited largely to roads and glades which left to horses or men the task of pulling the artillery into position. A different situation existed in the north, between the Gulf of Finland and the Kingisepp-Leningrad road, where the country remains more or less open and the ground is composed of firm limestone suitable for the operation of armored vehicles. [] the area around Lomonosov (N 59-55, E 29-46) and Petrodvorets (N 59-53, E 29-53) was within range of 12-inch artillery from Kronstadt (N 60-00, E 29-47) or Kotlin Island. South of Pskov-Porkhov, the ground is higher than that just mentioned; and, since it is covered with sandy hills, the ground is suitable for armored operations. 25X1
21. [] the Pskov-Gatchina railway line was double-track, while all other railway lines in the western part of Leningrad Oblast were single-track. 25X1
22. [] the forests in the western part of Leningrad Oblast afforded the Germans protection against air attacks in summer and also in winter, since 70 percent of the forests were composed of fir and pine trees. Footprints in the snow created a hindrance during the winter. The Germans successfully used white snow overalls for troops and whitewashed their vehicles and artillery as well. Such camouflage was effective against observation from the ground, but lacked full tests in its effectiveness against observation from the air. [] this latter point was based on the fact that during the entire German campaign the Germans held air superiority along their eastern front. Up to 1944, the Soviets never even attempted air attacks against communication lines or troop concentrations. 25X1
23. In the Soviet villages closest to the Estonian-Soviet frontier, concrete machine gun nests were discovered under the first houses of the villages. Further east, no such machine gun nests were found, but along the main roads some of the villages had steel gun platforms.
24. A line of light, concrete fortifications was strung along the Estonian-Soviet frontier, but since the line lacked depth it was of no hindrance to the German army in 1941.
25. On the eastern outskirts of Kingisepp, north of the main road, the Soviets had brick barracks for frontier troops.
26. [] in Pskov there were barracks along both sides of the road leading to Porkhov. On the southern outskirts of Pskov, there was a small airfield used by the Germans for Junkers 16 fighters (sic). At that time, the airfield had no concrete runways. 25X1
27. On the eastern outskirts of Porkhov, north of the main road, there were barracks in which the Germans housed their 11th Armored Regiment.
28. [] approximately four kilometers west of Luga there were large compounds and a rifle range. These compounds were called I and II Polygons. 25X1

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In the I Polygon, there were two-to three-story buildings which included a military hospital. In the II Polygon, there were only wooden barracks and a rifle range.

29. [redacted] throughout the German campaign, the Germans never succeeded in vanquishing the partisans. The best that the Germans could attain was to confine the partisans more or less to the forests, even though their threat always remained. As a result, every working party had to be placed under the protection of a heavy guard, which caused a considerable drain on the German fighting force. 25X1

30. [redacted] the Germans found that partisans appeared in areas, especially, where there had been an NKVD or a Communist Party center. In 1942 and 1943, the areas around Kingisepp, Volosovo, Gdov, Polna (N 58-27, E 28-09), Os'mino (N 59-00, E 29-06), Pakov, Strugi Krasnyye (N 58-17, E 29-06), Plyussa (N 58-26, E 29-21), and Luga were considered particularly infested with partisans. During the German retreat in 1944, the partisans exacted a heavy toll of casualties in the forests, located within a 30-kilometer radius of Nikolayevo (N 58-16, E 29-27). 25X1

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